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I.

THE PLACE OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY IN MODERN HISTORY.*

THE work done by the Westminster Assembly of Divines, in one aspect of it, is "the ablest and ripest product" of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. But, in another view, it is the starting point of that splendid religious and political development of the English-speaking peoples, which, on its religious side, is marked by the evangelical revival and the modern Christian propaganda at home and abroad; and, on its political side, is marked by the enfranchisement of the peoples of the United Kingdom, the building up of autonomous colonies within the British empire, and the planting of the continental republic of the United States. Of course, every work done by man, just because it has place in the organic historical movement, has roots in the past and bears fruit in the future. Of the most of these works, we are entitled to say that each of them is one of a vast number of equally important steps which men are always taking in the march of humanity to its predestined goal.

But we shall fall into a grave historical error if we assign to the finished work of the Westminster Assembly a function in the history of the English-speaking peoples of any other than the highest and most critical import. The waters of the great Lakes move continuously through the St. Lawrence basin to the Atlantic Ocean. At no point is the movement uninteresting or without

* An address delivered at the celebration, by Princeton Theological Seminary, of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Westminster Standards.

three full sermons of Calvin. The author treats successively: (1) the Reformer's views of the necessity and dignity of the ministry of the Word; (2) the importance of his sermons; (3) the extant sermons; (4) their character; (5) their style; (6) their Scripturalness; (7) their contents; (8) their actuality; whilst in the last chapter the conclusions of these various considerations are succinctly stated.

The style of the book is simple, clear and straightforward. Every page indicates close study and patient research. The author's present work is largely free from the fault which characterized his *Hyperius*, viz., excessive quotation in Latin and other tongues. There is yet enough of it to restrict its usefulness to a limited class of readers. But he has succeeded in painting a life-like portrait of Calvin, the preacher, whose only aim in preaching was to feed his hearers from the Scriptures of God, intensely in earnest, vivid in his illustrations, fearlessly aggressive, unto bitterness even when the occasion demanded it, popular in the true sense of the word, and always deeply impressive.

The study is of permanent value in Calvinistic literature.

Holland, Mich.

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A CAMERONIAN APOSTLE, being some account of JOHN MACMILLAN of Balmaghie. By the Rev. H. M. B. REID, B.D., Balmaghie. With Ten Illustrations. Paisley and London: Alexander Gardner, 1896. 8vo, pp. xii, 308.

It is odd that so remarkable a man as John Macmillan, the instrument under God in giving ecclesiastical organization to the "Godly Remnant" of the Covenanters who saved to Scotland and the world the principle of "spiritual independence," and of perpetuating their testimony by the founding of what is known as the Reformed Presbyterian Church, should have had to wait a century and a half for his biography. It is still more odd that when this biography has at length come to be written, it is at the hands not of one of his spiritual descendants, nor even of an adherent of the Church which grew out of his labors, but of a minister of that Established Church of Scotland out of which he was thrust, against whose Erastianism he protested, and whose authority he "declined." Mr. Reid's interest in Macmillan seems to have arisen primarily out of the merely external circumstance that he holds the living in the Established Church which Macmillan held; and there are not wanting throughout the volume indications of the fundamentally antiquarian impulse which underlies it. But Mr. Reid is far from being out of sympathy with the character and even the convictions of his great predecessor in the holding at Balmaghie; and, being withal an exact and fair-minded historian, he has written an account of him which even those who look back to him as their father in Christ must recognize as just and appreciative. That he was "indubitably a good man," eminent in piety, conscientiousness, sincerity and honesty, he has no doubt. "Whether he attained to be a 'great man,' or just fell short of that coveted eminence," he adds, in summing up his character, "I shall leave others to decide. Certainly he took part in a great epoch of the Scottish Church, and acquitted himself bravely and honestly. That Church has always had a way of casting out men whom she, at her heart, loved and honored. Macmillan is one of these respected and beloved outcasts. The Church of our day has won much for which he contended and suffered; and she cannot cherish any grudge amid her gains. How much more she may yet acquire, which he would have wished, it is impossible to say. But in him she may claim one of her own children, bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh; whose chief crime (if

such it be) was that he longed to see her made perfect in a world full of compromises, and whose chief praise must, in this respect, be that he demanded a 'spiritual independence' such as now her best and most loyal sons are willing to defend."

Thus the children of the persecutors build the monuments of the prophets, and the children of the persecuted may well look on and rejoice that the painful sowing is come to such a harvest. Looking back from this distance of time upon the Revolution settlement, surely all must acknowledge that there were elements of undesirable Erastianism connected with it, and no one will deny that the dealings of the crown with the Church in the immediately subsequent years gave grave cause of complaint to those who were set for the maintenance of spiritual independence. We cannot wonder that earnest spirits like Macmillan, who had entered the newly settled Church with high hopes, should grow gradually to despair of their realization; and the reading of the "Grievances" given in to the Presbytery by himself and his colleagues will go far to make us all his partisans. If we are to condemn the defiance of law and order by which he held the possession of his church and manse so many years after his deposition and in despite of all efforts of the civil powers to dispossess him, we must remember that he considered himself and his people considered him unjustly and illegally dealt with; and that it was a matter of principle with "the Remnant," among whom he had been bred and with whom he had early in this strife reaffiliated himself, to repudiate the authority of all courts, ecclesiastical and civil, constituted under the existing laws. So little did this argue with them a real lawlessness, that it coëxisted with the most excessive scrupulosity relative to orderly procedure—a scrupulosity which kept them for sixteen years without any ministry and for nearly thirty-seven more, after the accession to them of Macmillan, without provision for its continuance, because, forsooth, it was not orderly for a single minister to ordain! Men like these may be adjudged mistaken in their judgment as to the authority of certain laws, but they cannot be accused of a lawless spirit. And in Macmillan's own case, his subsequent life as minister to "the Societies," and his triumphant death in a good old age in the very odor of piety are his sufficient vindication.

It is much to Mr. Reid's credit that he is able to thread the mazes of this noble but irregular life-history with sympathy and just appreciation: and it is much to the gain of us all that he is able by so doing to vindicate the common Presbyterian right to the name and the example of this true servant of God. Into the Free Church of Scotland, on May 26, 1876, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland carried its strength and traditions: on June 13, 1782, the Reformed Presbytery of America united with the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania and formed the Synod of the Associate Reformed Church, one of the constituent Churches of the present United Presbyterian Church of North America: "remnants" were left behind, some of which have since then been able to find a congenial home in other branches of the Church. Those that still preserve their separate testimony, continue to enjoy the esteem of their sister Presbyterian bodies. Those who have carried that testimony into the bosom of sister bodies, who alike with them stand for the principle of "spiritual independence," have brought to those other bodies their great inheritances—and, among them, the right to claim such a father in God as John Macmillan as their own.

Princeton.

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The Story of the Christian Church. By George R. Crooks, D.D., LL.D. Late Professor of Church History in Drew Theological Seminary. 8vo, pp. xiii, 604. (New York: Eaton & Mains; Cincinnati: Curts & Jennings, 1897.)